

<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article3218>



France

The NPA in crisis: We have to explain because we have to start again

- Debate - Building new parties of the left -

Publication date: Friday 27 December 2013

Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine - All rights reserved

This article, unlike the others on the NPA in this section, was not a contribution to the 2013 meeting of the IC because the author is not a member of the Fourth International but is identified with the International Socialist Tendency (IST) group Socialisme par en bas (SPEB) that joined the LCR some years before the creation of the NPA. It is of course part of the ongoing discussion within the NPA.

We will not dwell here on signs that the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) is in crisis or on comparisons between the dynamics at its foundation with the current situation. The failure is so severe as to be undeniable. We failed. But the reasons that led us to create the NPA are still there. We have to understand why we failed, especially as we have to start again.

One of the hypotheses developed in this article is that the NPA is not born yet. But this does not mean that nothing has been done. Our experience has put us in a better position to understand the challenges we haven't been able to meet. And this experience has also helped to change the situation in which we must now operate. To paraphrase Daniel Bensaïd: because we have tried, we have earned the right to start again.

We are the failure

The temptation is always great to make our responsibilities seem less important because of external reasons, be they the period we're in, or the creation of the Front de Gauche (FdG),¹ [\[1\]](#) which has occupied part of our "space".

These bad explanations must be cast aside.

The times we live in have seen no less than the start of a systemic crisis of capitalism, quantitatively the largest social revolt in France since 1968 (the movement for pensions), the Arab revolutions, the Indignados movement in Spain and Greece, the Occupy movement in the United States. How can you make such a period the reason for the failure² [\[2\]](#) of an anti-capitalist party? The opposite is true: the inability of the NPA to show its usefulness in this period of crisis of the system and of mass revolts was the reason for its internal crisis. Movement setbacks and the progress of reactionary forces—first and foremost the fascists—do not invalidate this analysis, even though they can help change the situation in which we operate. In times of deep crisis for the system, the subjective element is crucial. The same conditions can benefit one side or the other, depending on their ability to take the initiative, to build appropriate responses...or depending on the paralysis of the opposite forces.

The months and years ahead will be explosive. This makes it all the more important to draw correct balance sheets.

Another "bad" explanation: the Parti de Gauche (PG) and the Front de Gauche. Was the space for the NPA suddenly occupied by these new political realities? It would probably be useful to clarify what is meant by space.³ [\[3\]](#) In any case, it is not an inert substance to be manipulated. We're talking about conscious individuals who we believe will be the actors of their collective emancipation. The birth of the Parti de Gauche, followed by that of the FdG came slightly after that of the NPA. Here again the truth is the reverse: these forces benefited—at least in part—from the weakness of the NPA. The inability to build a "useful" force for tens of thousands of trade unionists, activists associations, neighbourhood youth, etc led some of them to cast their hopes on the FdG, at least for a time.⁴ [\[4\]](#)

Electoral crystallisations, just like organisational crystallisations are the non-mechanical product of processes of political polarisation, radicalisation and experimentation. These are still in progress. The current failure of the NPA is not the end of the story.

The “new” is not born yet

Be it limitation or opportunity, the merit of the initiative to found the NPA is that of the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR), which remained the only organisation of significant size during the founding process and has played the role of propulsive force. This wasn't necessarily an obstacle to the construction of a new party.⁵ [5] But it gave a central responsibility to activists from the LCR to “let go”.

Any structure, any organisation creates its own conservatism in ideas as well as in practice. This is what gives an organisation the stability needed to hold out in difficult times and to withstand the pressures of the dominant ideology. But this conservatism, which always involves dangers, becomes a real obstacle when the situation changes.

The decision by a majority of the LCR to initiate the creation of a new party was not necessarily a turn away from its struggles or from its ideas. But it meant that the LCR as a tool, as it had existed, was no longer adequate to the tasks of the period.

Unlike the old, the new is, by definition, not written. It develops, experiments, adapts, builds itself. To be new, to learn to be useful in a new period, the NPA could only be built through a continuous process, with initially limited structures, as flexible as possible, leaving plenty of room for new and emerging debates and all kinds of experiments.

However, the shape and the disagreements at the root of the current crisis of the NPA are clear: the crisis of the NPA looks just like a crisis of the LCR. Disagreements bear on issues that had been raging within the LCR for over a decade (alliances with other left forces and intervention in elections). All the tendencies which were formed and then separated come from the LCR: Gauche Unitaire, followed by Convergences et Alternatives and now Gauche Anticapitaliste (GA). All the tendencies since the birth of the NPA, built in ways that are inherited from the LCR, were led by former leaders of the LCR (with one small exception).

This simple observation shows us that the “old” has dominated the “new” party. The LCR only opened the doors to its house. Generously, no doubt. We turned the light on, we offered coffee. We even sometimes moved some furniture around. But it was the LCR's house, the one the members of the LCR knew, and they knew how it worked. Others could only be guests. It turned out that that house was actually not suited to the tasks of the new period.

Underestimating the novelty of the period

1) Just a space to occupy... But why was there resistance to change on the part of a majority of the LCR? It was not a case of bad faith. A large majority had voted for the creation of a new party. Many were excited by the beginning of the process. Why then? Mainly because the reasons given “within the LCR” for the need to build the NPA did not take into account the radically new character of the period. As a result, the awareness of the need to let the new express itself remained superficial. Looking in two directions is not an effective way of orienting oneself.

In the prevalent analysis of the LCR, the start of the new era was basically “the collapse of the USSR and of Eastern

bloc countries combined with neoliberal capitalist globalisation”,⁶ [6] the end of a cycle started in 1917. The analysis was that the crisis of the Communist parties and the neoliberal evolution of the social democratic left opened up a space that had to be “occupied”. But through all this we stayed within the paradigm, frequently expressed in LCR, of “revolutionaries without a revolution”, that is to say “without immediate revolutionary perspectives”,⁷ [7] a strange though catchy phrase, by the bye.

What mattered mainly in the founding of the new party were therefore somewhat wider programmatic boundaries designed to attract some of the orphans of the traditional parties while remaining radical enough to maintain, for the future, revolutionary perspectives. The idea of programmatically opening up the LCR a little could only lead, for the majority of the members of the LCR, to opening up the LCR a little organisationally.

2) ...or a more radical change? In this analysis of the novelty of the period two elements remained marginal: the systemic crisis of capitalism and above all the return of mass struggles and of an anti-capitalist consciousness. The systemic crisis of capitalism means we are talking of a long-term new period of development of all the contradictions within the system. These can only be solved through a succession of political crises and large-scale confrontations.

Why is this important? It is through concrete experiences in the process of crisis and confrontation that our class (broadly defined) may, on a mass scale, acquire levels of consciousness and organisation making it suitable for a revolutionary transformation. And it is in the context of these experiences that various party political strategies will be tested. To take but one current example.⁸ [8] During the first few months after the fall of Mubarak in Egypt, the few who dared to criticise the army were completely marginalised on this issue. A year later their position on this point is more widely adopted and their audience has grown, especially among the youth.

The other factor is the return of mass struggles: the strikes of the winter of 1995 in France, the mass uprisings in Indonesia and South Korea, Seattle in 1999 and the emergence of a global movement, counter-summits and social forums, the global movement against the war in Iraq (to take examples preceding the launch of the NPA). In this dynamic process a global critique of the system has resurfaced—the consciousness, at least at an embryonic stage, that all struggles are linked by an overall logic, that the fight must be against a whole system. This is expressed in a stronger form still since the ideological hegemony of the neoliberal model has collapsed with the crisis. A generation of tens of thousands of activists has been in formation for the past 15 years or so on the basis of these experiments.

From propaganda to strategy as the heart of the new party

There is therefore not a fixed space needing to be filled. Rather, radically different possibilities open up in the struggle for another society. What makes a new party both necessary and possible is the conjunction of a period which can set in motion millions of people with the emergence of tens of thousands of activists within various fronts of the movement, who are their practical leaders on a day to day basis.

Without them the hundreds of workplace confrontations each year would be impossible, as would be the more generalised movements, strikes and mass demonstrations (for pensions, against Jacques Chirac’s attempt to take back the rights of young workers, against the war...). Without them the heroic struggle of the undocumented, the mobilisation around Palestine, the struggle against nuclear power or local struggles such as those conducted against the airport at Notre Dame des Landes, the struggles in poor neighbourhoods, etc could not be maintained. This is the basis for the aim of a force that brings together and coordinates them, making it possible to develop a global strategy for the movement to victories and to give a perspective of collective liberation.

Revolutionary activists should, of course, play a role in this process. But this requires, on their part, a “cultural” revolution in order to be up to the task. They must break with ways of thinking and operating cultivated over decades of marginalisation of the extreme left, of being “revolutionaries without a revolution”. We must move from “the weapon of criticism” to the “criticism of weapons” and not underestimate the radical change this leads to, in practice as in theory.⁹ [9] We must stop confining ourselves to propagandism, to the cult of the “correct” programme, to the “general strike” mantra and to criticising traditional leaderships of the working class movement as the only possible orientation.

We have failed to make this cultural revolution: moving from propaganda from outside the movement to elaborating a strategy from within the movement. This requires not only an awareness of the issues but also leaning on the thousands of activists in the movement in order to begin to create a new revolutionary culture, gradually developing on the basis of our shared experiences and on the achievements of the revolutionary tradition. It requires a strategy capable of bringing along the whole movement, which would pose anew the major debates and reformulate the project for emancipation.

The party remained external to the concerns of activists

1) A party for struggles ... or for elections? Despite what was announced, the NPA was never conceived as a party for struggle, a party of the movement. Following on from Olivier Besancenot’s performance at the polls, it has worked primarily as an electoral outlet. Let us remember that the foundation of the NPA was rushed in order to present candidates for the European elections, as the first nationwide public action for the new party.

There followed many debates and incessant (and unresolved!) strife on electoral tactics while resources were invested primarily in national election campaigns, but few discussions on union work, building an anti-racist movement, a movement against debt, the defence of public services, concrete solidarity with the Arab revolutions. How many debates and exchanges of experiences on the development of struggles in local areas? How much was put into the building, by the whole party, of the Copenhagen, Strasbourg or Frankfurt counter-summits, the march of the undocumented, the collectives against debt, etc? Not to mention topics such as police brutality or the Front National, or new ways of mobilising and organising.

2) Politics outside the movement: This orientation is rooted in a theory of the autonomy of social movements not challenged and not discussed at the foundation of the NPA. In the new period this theory has become the theory of the depoliticisation of the movement.

With the downturn in the 1980s, and the predominance of defensive struggles against neoliberal capitalist restructuring, it was much more difficult concretely to experience the emancipatory potentialities of the movement. This opened the way for a division between the field of “social” struggles and the field of the “political” fight. This separation was sanctioned by the appearance of the phrase “social movement”, as an umbrella term for struggles and groupings, as opposed to the political field defined narrowly as the confrontation between parties, mainly on the electoral terrain.

This affected the LCR, which defended “the autonomy of social movements”. To understand how such a conception could develop, it should be added that it was nurtured and encouraged by a fundamentally sound critique of the tradition developed by the traditional parties (first and foremost the Communist Party) of using the trade union movement or other groupings for their own benefit—meaning that these organisations instead of being actors of emancipation became tools for party strategies.

In the name of this conception, LCR activists increasingly intervened in movements as individuals. Sometimes they played a key role and brought with them their general conceptions. But there was less discussion of strategy within the party, and less collective testing. Gradually the consequences became profound for the functioning of the party itself: a separation arose between those most involved in the movement and those working within the party. The leadership became less subject to the pressure of the movement, the questions it raises and the need for strategic development it imposes. Conversely it reinforced the “pragmatic” bent for activists becoming heavily involved in specific, mainly defensive movements.

Last but not least: with the decrease in discussions on the issues raised by the movement, the party’s intervention became dominated by programmatic delimitations with other parties. This led to an increasingly central place being given to elections.

3) Politics in the movement: The NPA was born out of the development of mass movements, yet this conception has in fact continued to dominate its orientation and its practice. It does not meet the needs of movements constantly confronted with the question of the overall logic of the system, nor does it convince activists, who are brought outside of their place of intervention.

The autonomy of the movement is a fine thing, but it needs to be thought through: the movement transforms society, not elected individuals or political parties. In other words: the revolutionary transformation of society can only be the work of the majority of the movement of the oppressed and exploited.

This does not mean autonomy of the movement vis-À-vis politics but that the movement itself evolves and becomes political. Political in the sense that it becomes the alternative,¹⁰ [10] that it struggles for power, not aiming to replace those who are at the head of existing institutions with its own representatives, but in order to replace existing institutions with its own collective forms of power”and that it starts to build them in today’s struggles.

This does not mean that the movement must stay away from political parties but it means they must prove the validity of what they stand for within the movement itself”it also means they can only prove this through understanding and respecting the rhythms of the movement and through developing a useful strategy for the movement.

It follows that a revolutionary strategy is a strategy that shows how the movement can become political, through all the experiences of the class struggle on all fronts (including elections)â€”rather than one which theorises the separation between the social movement and the political movement.

It follows that the party cannot invent this strategy from outside. It should first aim to promote the generalisation of experiences and dynamics from the movement itself: just look how examples as diverse as the Indignados, Occupy, the Arab revolutions, workplace occupations, “Can’t pay, won’t pay” movements poseâ€”at least in embryonic formâ€”the question of another power, of a real democracy. They also areâ€”more positivelyâ€”the expression of the distrust that exists toward institutions as expressed also by low voter turnout, the rejection of the mainstream media or riots where what is identified with the “institutions of society” gets broken.

Unmoving conceptions externally imposed

1) “Our response to the crisis”: a strategic discussion aborted: The dominant conception in the NPA is that the “correct” programme (and the correct demands) can be brought to the movement from without by the party. Hence the emphasis on elections as a way to address a mass audience. Hence the emphasis on programmatic delimitations

in order to differentiate between true anti-capitalists and “treacherous” leaders.

If a programme is necessary it should be a programme that combines goals and the means of achieving them, a guide to action. It cannot be a “perfect”, fixed programme, born in the mind of a few revolutionaries; it must be modified by experiences and developments. The elaboration of such a programme is therefore inseparable from the development of the movement itself and of debates on the experiences and issues raised. From this point of view, probably nothing is more indicative of the failure of the NPA than the text “Our response to the crisis”, adopted at the first congress in 2009.¹¹ [11]

This text could have opened up a debate on what an anti-capitalist strategy in a period of deep crisis and mass struggles would look like. Yet the discussion was confined to the contents of a programme, a list of demands, which some found not radical enough and others too radical, everyone being obsessed with what boundaries to establish or not to establish with the Front de Gauche.

Let’s be clear, the more or less implicit reference for many comrades in this debate was the transitional programme advocated by Trotsky in 1938.¹² [12] We will not discuss here the validity of the reference. What is striking, however, when we take the transitional programme as it was defended by Trotsky is that it has an element of an action programme, each demand being combined with a suitable organisational form: strengthening trade unions and struggling within them and factory committees for the opening of account ledgers and workers’ control, pickets and workers’ militia for the arming of the proletariat, councils grouping factory committees and neighbourhood organisations on a geographical basis for the workers’ and peasants’ government.

This articulation of demands with specific forms of organisation of the movement is exactly what is missing in “Our response to the crisis”. We discussed demands, but it proved impossible to move on to a discussion on the ways in which these demands could be carried out by the movement.

2) No need for concrete analysis? The lack of strategic concern leads to a lack of concern in the analysis of concrete reality. This has led to the lack of analysis of a long cycle of evolution (and recomposition) of the capitalist organisation of production, the deconstruction of the traditional working class and the reconstruction of a new class composition. Yet it is also the reconfiguration of the reality of our class which has put in crisis the traditional organisations of the labour movement. Is there a specific revolutionary subject? Should we still think in terms of strategic productive sectors?

Assuming that we should, are they the same as 20 or 30 years ago? Should we think in terms of organising struggling workers by occupation, by trade or by location? Don’t the development of migration and the feminisation of labour alter the relationship between struggles against discrimination and struggles in workplaces? Don’t the fragmentation of production units and contracts, the development of precariousness and the growth in service jobs lead to a change in the role and in the methods of struggle in inner-city areas? These discussions “but we could cite others” were absent in the construction of the NPA, not to mention the changing face of the state or of imperialism, the role of the media, of social networks.

A new workers’ movement capable of developing strategies and organisational forms that correspond to the new realities of class composition must be rebuilt. This should be combined with resistance to restructuring in the old sectors where the old organisations remain the best established. The articulation should be put in these terms rather than in the choice between reconstruction and recomposition.

Is one born a revolutionary, or does one

become one?

A party cannot develop a strategy if its members are not involved in the movement in different ways. This also works in reverse: it is through discussions necessary for elaboration and through tests made within the movement that a “new” revolutionary consciousness may be forged among the collective members of the party, and that previous ideas may be modified, enriched and criticised.

This requires a break with the idea of a ready-made revolutionary theory created by the leaders of party tendencies, and with its mirror image: a misconception of reformism as a simple “mind manipulation”. The influence of reformism cannot be reduced to the “treacherous” leaders betraying addled masses to whom the truth must be revealed.

Reformism is the product of a contradictory consciousness reflecting a contradictory experience. On the one hand the experience of domination (exploitation and oppression) and competition that promotes feelings of powerlessness and makes the idea that only elected officials can improve things seem sensible. On the other hand, the experience of resistance to this domination, which not only tears individualism apart, and recreates solidarity, but which also puts in question the power of the boss and the neutrality of the state.

This means that reformism cannot be fought only in terms of ideology (with propaganda). The return of mass struggles and the experiences and failures of those involved in them are the basis for changes in mass consciousness. But we need to understand this change as a process. There is no binary switch at an individual or collective level in the evolution of consciousness from reformism to revolutionary politics.

Fighting against the influence of reformism and developing a revolutionary consciousness are tied together. They cannot be advanced through proclamations but through practical demonstrations to promote all experiences demonstrating practically the collective strength we have and the superiority of a strategy based on it compared with institutional strategies.

Tinkering is not enough; we must rebuild

1) Still possible...and still necessary: The task of building is still before us. The audience won by the Front de Gauche has shown the availability of hundreds of thousands of young people and workers for a political and radical perspective. The Front de Gauche is caught as in the straitjacket of a cartel of organisations whose main objective is not self-organisation and the development of counter-powers but an institutional perspective. It therefore cannot be the basis for the force we need to build. Struggles go on outside these organisations in the youth, in the banlieues, often in a fragmented manner.

The nature of the times makes the construction of an anti-capitalist force not just possible; it makes it more necessary than ever. Without the coordination of movement activists and the progressive development of an anti-capitalist strategy, victories become increasingly difficult to gain for specific struggles, as demonstrated by the movement on pensions, the anti-racist struggle or the anti-war movement.

During the movement over pensions the strategy of union leaders imposed itself by default. This is because there was not a force bringing together tens of thousands of radical unionists with the respect of their workmates in all sectors and regions, arising from the development of combative local unions or rank and file committees, linked to the majority of young people in high schools and colleges, able to organise local support. Such a force could have proposed an alternative strategy to that of the union leaders through generalising from the best experiences.

In other words, victories, even partial victories, require that strategies of confrontation with the logic of the system be proposed widely to the movement and that forms of grassroots organisation and counter-powers be developed. Such a force is also made necessary by the general tendency of the capitalist system. Without a perspective of global transformation and emancipation, reactionary “solutions” will have the upper hand. Therefore, we must try again.

2) Rebuilding, saying it and doing it: We should not be ashamed of our failure. We all have the merit of having tried. But failure it is that has demoralised thousands of activists and developed scepticism more widely still. We must therefore say publicly that we have failed; it is a necessary condition if we want to be trusted in our desire to try again. We also need to say that we do not want to patch up what didn't work, but that we are calling for a radical overhaul of the NPA. These conditions are necessary but not sufficient. We are not asking to be believed on trust. We'll be judged by our actions. And this cannot be postponed.

3) Where to start? Proclaiming a different mode of operation or a different programme will not create a new party. Departures have left the structures of the party in a fragile state, from local committees to national structures (commissions, press, national leadership bodies...). We should “take advantage” of the situation to restart a process of foundation on the basis of the local committees—national structures can simply, at least for the time being, “manage” current affairs.

Committees for a real refoundation should be autonomous—regarding their local involvement, mode of operation, the organisation of their debates—and coordinated for national campaigns on which they agree and for debates relating to the rebuilding of the party. These committees should be completely open to the outside, encouraging the participation of movement activists, even if they do not join the party. At all levels we should encourage discussions between activists of other parties of the radical left.

At least during a transition period, the newspaper could serve primarily as a liaison organ between the committees: reports of experiences made by the committees, announcements of protests, meetings, events, contributions to the debate, etc.

The cornerstone of this process should be involvement in the movement and the development of our strategy as a basis for an exchange of experiences and as a basis for discussions, including theoretical debates. From this point of view, the development of campaigns against austerity and public debt—related to the refusal of redundancy plans and to international solidarity—and the fight against the development of racism and the extreme right should be dominant axes for our activities.

Conclusion

Nothing would be worse than making the forthcoming NPA congress a sham. The process leading to this congress must be a part of the wider process of rebuilding: not limited to internal debate but encouraging open discussion with the outside on all subjects and at all levels, starting work on our strategy and our functioning without excluding more theoretical debates (the dynamics of capital/labour, movement/institutions, oppression/exploitation).

This process will be a live one if it takes as a basis action within the movements, experiments made by the various committees, and if it does not claim to solve in advance discussions that must remain open.

In this sense the preparation for this congress should be seen as a refounding process on the basis of contributions going back and forth between committees rather than platforms made “at the top”, on which party members should

The NPA in crisis: We have to explain because we have to start again

position themselves. The congress itself should be thought of not as an end (of the process) but as a step on the way: the party itself should be conceived of as a process-party, an experimental party.

Finally, at this conference the youth must be put back at the heart of the party, of its committees, of its experiences, of its debates, and not as something separate, but as central to its activity, and even as a driving force. This is also a prerequisite for building a party for the future, a movement party, a new anti-capitalist party.

References

Adam, H el ene, Daniel Bensa d, Fran ois Coustal, L eon Cr emieux, Jacqueline Guillotin, Samuel Johsua, Alain Krivine, Olivier Martin, Christine Poupin, Pierre Rousset, Fran ois Sabado, Roseline Vachetta, 2009, [“De la LCR au NPA”](#).

Godard, Denis, 2009, “The NPA: a Space for Rebuilding”, [International Socialism 123 \(Summer 2009\)](#).

Godard, Denis, 2011 “Qu’est-ce qu’on veut : Tout!” *Que faire?* 8 (second series).

Johsua, Samy, 2006, “M elanges Strat egiques”, [Que faire? 5 \(1st series\)](#).

Marx, Karl, 1975, [Early Writings \(Penguin\)](#).

NPA, 2011, [“Nos R eponses   la Crise”](#).

Sitel, Francis, 2008, “Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste, Espoirs et Pi eges” in [Critique Communiste, 187 \(June\)](#).

Trotsky, Leon, 1938, [The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International](#).

This English translation was published by [International Socialist Journal](#) in Issue: 137, Posted: 9 January 13.

[1] The Front de Gauche is the coalition formed in 2009 between the French Communist Party and the newly-formed Parti de Gauche, the latter being in the main a left split from the social democratic Parti Socialiste. Other smaller groups have also joined the Front de Gauche. This article was translated by Sylvestre Jaffard. It originally appeared in French in [Que Faire? number 10, August-October 2012](#).

[2] True, events of such magnitude can unleash internal crises. Their novelty and their importance should, in any organisation worthy of the name, spark many discussions in order to analyse them and to develop responses. It is indeed through this kind of debate and through attempts to intervene effectively that a new party can be forged. Alas, everyone will agree that this hasn’t been the NPA’s problem. We are therefore talking here about a failure.

[3] For further developments on this question of the “space to be occupied”, see my answer to a debate between Alex Callinicos and Fran ois Sabado at the foundation of the NPA-Godard, 2009. But the answer itself is dated and shows what the experience of the NPA has brought along, despite its failure: it remains well below a proper awareness. of the changes to be made in our approach. See the following theses.

[4] To put it clearly, the FdG has seized the zeitgeist better than the NPA, at least when it comes to elections. M elenchon’s radical speeches call for a “participatory” campaign, the use of such modes of mobilisation as the occupation of public squares. Yet, and this will be a problem for

The NPA in crisis: We have to explain because we have to start again

comrades who join the FdG, its ability to “capitalise” on its voting base is still largely unproven. I tend to think there are too many obstacles for this: the strength of the Communist Party, which will oppose a “common house”, the focus on institutions, the tensions between the forces.

[5] See Sitel, 2008. For Francis Sitel, who knew the organisation well, creating a new party with just the LCR as an organised force was dangerous. Many of his arguments are interesting. The problem is that we do not start from what we wish we had, but from what exists. On this basis, we must find solutions. Otherwise we look for shortcuts. Francis Sitel left the NPA at its very beginning, with the Gauche Unitaire, LCR activists who instead rallied to the Front de Gauche. This grouping probably earned more positions by joining the FdG early on. But its political evolution is such that the Gauche Anticapitaliste often forgets to mention it among the currents that could form an anti-capitalist pole within the FdG. Should this be a warning for the GA, which broke away in June 2012?

[6] Adam and others, 2009.

[7] Johsua, 2006. Johsua notably concludes: “Outside a revolutionary period, it is impossible to have a mass popular party (or something approaching) without an institutional basis.”

[8] All the revolutionary processes of history are fascinating to study from this point of view, from 1848 France to the 1974 revolution in Portugal, the Russian Revolution of 1917 or the Iranian Revolution of 1979. Failures are more linked to the inability of the revolutionary process to have parties up to the task than to lack of determination and radicality of the movements. It is true that in the historical analysis it is easier to deduce that the “masses” are lacking in this or that. This is a prime trick for evading responsibilities. The other is to blame the “treacherous” leaders of the class. Comfortable, certainly...but not very useful in strategic terms.

[9] See Marx, 1975, p251.

[10] About what is meant by political movement see Godard, 2011.

[11] NPA, 2011.

[12] Trotsky, 1938.